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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel claim 22 without prejudice or disclaimer.

1. (Currently amended) A method of detecting whether an image to be processed includes an image of a characteristic portion, comprising:

using an imaging device to image a subject at a location to form an image to be processed, and obtaining information about a distance between said subject and said location;

using said information to set upper and lower limitations on a size range of a search window for an image of a characteristic portion with reference to a size of the image to be processed;

determining a size of said search window within said size range between said upper and lower limitations;

cutting sequentially plural images having a predetermined size from said image to be processed, a size of said cut images being limited based on the determined size of said search window;

comparing the cut images with a template of a plurality of templates corresponding to the image of the characteristic portion, if any template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window; and

comparing the cut images with a resized template which is resized from a template of the plurality of templates, if no template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window

~~A method for detecting whether an image of a characteristic portion exists in an image to be processed, comprising:~~

~~sequentially cutting plural images having a predetermined size from the image to be processed;~~

~~comparing the cut images with verification data corresponding to the image of the characteristic portion; and~~

~~setting upper and lower limitations of a size range of a search window for the image of the characteristic portion with reference to the size of the image to be processed, based on information about a distance between a subject and a location of imaging the subject, obtained when the image to be processed has been photographed, thereby limiting the size of~~

~~the cut images to be compared with the verification data~~.

2. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said using said information ~~limiting said size range~~ comprises using information about a focal length of a photographing lens in addition to the information about said a distance ~~to the subject~~.

3. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the image to be processed comprises an image obtained by resizing an input image.

4. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein said comparing the cut images with said template ~~the comparison~~ is effected through use of the verification data corresponding to the image of a characteristic portion of determined size by changing a size of the resized image.

5. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) The method according to claim 3, wherein said comparing the cut images with said template ~~the comparison~~ is effected through use of the verification data, the data being obtained by changing the size of the image of the characteristic portion while the size of the resized image is fixed.

6. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the template ~~verification data~~ comprises template image data pertaining to the image of the characteristic portion.

7-8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously presented) A method of limiting a range in which an image is processed, comprising

providing information about a position of a characteristic portion extracted from a first image, the information being obtained by the method according to claim 1;

limiting a range in which an image of a characteristic portion of a second image to be processed followed by said first image to be processed, is retrieved through use of said information.

10. (Currently amended) A computer-readable medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method of detecting whether an image to be processed includes an image of a characteristic portion, said method comprising:

imaging a subject at a location to form an image to be processed, and obtaining information about a distance between said subject and said location;

using said information to set upper and lower limitations on a size range of a search window for an image of a characteristic portion with reference to a size of the image to be processed;

determining a size of said search window within said size range between said upper and lower limitations;

cutting sequentially plural images having a predetermined size from said image to be processed, a size of said cut images being limited based on the determined size of said search window;

comparing the cut images with a template of a plurality of templates corresponding to the image of the characteristic portion, if any template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window; and

comparing the cut images with a resized template which is resized from a template of the plurality of templates, if no template of the plurality of templates conforms in size to the determined size of the search window ~~detecting whether an image of a characteristic portion exists in an image to be processed, the method comprising:~~

~~sequentially cutting plural images having a predetermined size from the image to be processed;~~

~~comparing the cut images with verification data pertaining to the image of the characteristic portion; and~~

~~setting upper and lower limitations of a size range of a search window for the image of the characteristic portion with reference to a size of the image to be processed based on information about a distance between a subject and a location of imaging of the subject that is obtained when the image to be processed has been photographed, to limit the size of the cut images.~~

11. (Original) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, the instructions further comprising limiting a range in which an image of a characteristic portion of a second image to be processed followed by a first image to be processed is retrieved, through use of information about a position of a characteristic portion extracted from the first image.

12. (Withdrawn) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, wherein the computer readable medium having the instructions is positioned in at least one of an imaging device and an image processing device.

13. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, wherein the ~~distance~~ information used to set said upper and lower limitations on said size range ~~in said limiting said size range~~ corresponds to distance information added to the image to be processed as tag information.

14. (Currently amended) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, further comprising determining the ~~distance~~ information used to set said upper and lower limitations on said size range ~~in said limiting said size range~~.

15. (Withdrawn) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 14, wherein the determining is performed by at least one of a range sensor, a unit for counting a number of motor drive pulses arising when the focus of a photographing lens is set on a subject, a unit for determining information about a focal length of a photographing lens, a unit for estimating a distance to the subject based on a photographing mode and a unit for estimating a distance to the subject based on a focal length of a photographing lens.

16. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, further comprising subjecting the template ~~verification data~~ to an artificial intelligence system.

17. (Withdrawn-Currently amended) The computer readable medium of claim 16, wherein the artificial intelligence system comprises at least one of a neural network and a genetic algorithm applied to the template ~~verification data~~ to provide learned recognition for the image of the subject.

18-21. (Canceled)

22. (Canceled).

23. (Currently amended) The method of claim 1 ~~22~~, wherein said distance between said subject and said location ~~of said imaging said subject~~ is determined during said imaging said subject.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said imaging said subject is performed by using an imaging device comprising a range sensor, said distance being determined based on a signal from said range sensor.

25. (Currently amended) The method according to claim 1, ~~wherein said verification data comprises template data, and~~ wherein said comparing the cut images with said template ~~verification data~~ comprises computing a degree of matching between said image to be processed and said template ~~data~~ by determining a normalizing cross-correlation function between an image cut by said search window and said template ~~data~~.

26. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 25, further comprising:

shifting said search window in a scanning direction if said degree of matching does not reach a threshold value.